

programs for poor children. There are no cuts in corporate loopholes or tax breaks. Despite the fact that tax expenditures cost the Federal Treasury over \$400 billion per year, there are no such savings in this bill.

There are no grazing fee increases or mining royalty increases. There are no savings in the military budget or in NASA's budget.

The only cuts in this bill come from women and children. This reconciliation bill gives new meaning to putting women and children first.

Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to vote against this bill. I urge all Senators to stand for the 1.5 million children and reject this bill.

I yield the floor.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I believe our welfare system desperately needs reform, and most Americans agree. It is obvious that there is a strong consensus that parents seeking public assistance must be required to work or prepare for work. I wish it were more obvious that innocent children should be protected, and I have worked hard to make this case over the years as welfare reform has been debated.

As Governor of West Virginia in 1982, I started one of the first workfare programs of the country because I believe in work, and I am proud that West Virginia continues to use this community work program today. I have met parents who are proud to do community service and who have used their experience to gain skills that ultimately got them a paying job. This is what we should do. Moving from welfare dependency to work is hard, but it is the best path for families and their future.

While the debate about welfare reform is full of slogans and simplistic claims, it is far from easy to achieve the fundamental goals of promoting work and protecting children. The details of welfare reform do count, and that's why the Congress has consumed so much time and energy on this topic.

I regret that the Senate found itself acting on welfare reform under the rules of budget reconciliation legislation, which has strictly limited our debate to just 20 hours and has drastically constrained our ability to consider amendments to modify the proposal. Using reconciliation procedures, the majority has taken advantage of a special way to prevent its notion of welfare reform from being subject to true debate and alterations.

Last year, when the Senate worked on a bipartisan welfare reform bill, we spent 8 days debating welfare reform and held 43 rollcall votes. In an important signal of bipartisanship, an additional 62 amendments were accepted. While Democrats did not prevail with all of our amendments, we did have the chance to present our ideas and arguments for a genuine test of the Senate's will. It is unfortunate that the Republican leadership was not willing to take up welfare reform this year in the same fair, open process.

But even under the rules and constraints of reconciliation, some bipartisan progress has been made on the Senate floor. We have restored the Federal health and safety standards for child care by a rollcall vote of 96 to 0. We agreed to another amendment to invest more money to enhance the quality and availability of child care. Child care is the key to helping parents work, and parents need to have confidence in the care that their child is receiving.

I was also proud to cosponsor the Chafee-Breaux amendment to ensure continued Medicaid coverage to poor women and their children. Welfare reform should not be about reducing health care to needy families, and thanks to the bipartisan vote of 97 to 2, we know that health care coverage will be available for families with parents who are making the struggle to go from welfare to work—now and into the future.

We eliminated the optional food stamps block grant which had the potential to unravel this country's commitment to ensuring decent nutrition for all poor children, needy families, and dependent senior citizens, no matter what State they reside in. An optional block grant of food stamps could have weakened the country's nutrition programs. One of my greatest fears is that States that choose the block grant would be forced to reduce benefits in times of recession or other times of need, like national disasters. With our agricultural resources, America should not go backward and become a nation where some of its people and children go hungry.

And, I cosponsored the Breaux voucher amendment which assured basic support for innocent children for at least 5 years, and then gave States the option to provide non-cash assistance to children after a family reached the 5 year time limit. This amendment got 51 votes, but the rules of reconciliation demanded 60—so it fell.

An alternative amendment was offered by Senator FORD, but it also failed by a single vote. Because both of the voucher amendments failed, States are prohibited from using block grant funding to provide vouchers for children, and this is disturbing. Previous welfare bills from last year offered greater flexibility to States on vouchers.

But some of the amendments that passed are important bipartisan efforts to improve the bill. There is more we should do to protect innocent children, and I can only hope that our colleagues will understand this in conference or in the near future.

But time has run out under the rules of reconciliation, and we now are faced with a final vote on this legislation.

In my view, this welfare reform bill poses a huge experiment—and something that must be watched and evaluated carefully.

Proponents express full confidence that this new, bold welfare reform bill

will change the system and put parents to work, quickly allowing children to benefit as their parents move from dependency to self-sufficiency.

Opponents of the legislation charge that millions of children may be cast into poverty, and potentially end up on streets.

Because people end up on welfare for such different reasons and in different circumstances, it is not clear what the results will be. This legislation charts a new course for welfare, but it is untested.

I hope that proponents are right, and that this legislation has the right incentives. My hope is that the new pressure of a time limit will effectively and efficiently move parents into work, and families will benefit.

To help ensure this, I fought hard throughout this Congress to secure the proper funding for child care, which is essential for single parents to go to work. Thanks to the effort of many dedicated Members, this legislation invests \$13 billion in child care—more money than we are now spending, and this is a major accomplishment.

The legislation we are now considering has a larger contingency fund than the previously passed Senate bill to offer help to States in times of economic downturns and recessions, which is especially needed for States like West Virginia that are vulnerable to economic ups and downs.

Under the new block grant, States will have enormous flexibility—and strict requirements—to move families from welfare to work.

Will the combination of more child care money and the incentive of time limits be the right mix? Will our economy continue to grow, and unemployment rates stay low so welfare recipients truly have a real chance to compete and get jobs?

We will never know the answers, unless we try.

Because the American people want and expect welfare reform, I will vote to try this new approach—and hope that Congress does its part to push for the desired results.

But I also believe that this effort must be watched carefully and closely to ensure that the innocent children, who represent two-thirds of the people who depend on welfare, are not hurt.

This is why I fought so hard with others last year to secure \$15 million for research and evaluation. Every Member who votes for this legislation has an obligation to work with their State to ensure that this new system works, and to monitor the national progress as well.

Throughout this debate, I have tried to focus my attention on the needs of children. As usual in today's political environment, areas of bipartisan agreement do not attract attention, but they are still important.

In key areas for children, progress has been made. The Senate bill retains current law on foster care and programs to protect abused and neglected